

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT MATTERS

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<http://infoweb/DMB>



BENCHMARKING FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE

A benchmark is a standard by which performance can be measured or judged. It can be a national standard such as the Healthy People 2010 leading health indicators or it can be a locally-determined measure. Benchmarking is the systematic comparison of performance with other organizations in order to identify best practices that are appropriate to adapt for your own situation in order to achieve more efficient and/or effective performance. As a High Performance Organization, we must constantly answer the question, how do we know we're high-performing? Without the data, our words would be hollow.

Fairfax County benchmarks in a variety of ways. Almost 75 percent of the General Fund budget is associated with agencies whose service areas are

benchmarked by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). This includes Police, Fire, Library, Parks/ Recreation, Code Enforcement, Housing, Refuse Collection/Recycling, Youth Services, Human Resources, Information Technology, Facilities, Fleet Management, Purchasing, and Risk Management. The County has taken part in this process since 2000 and can compare its performance to approximately 130 other participating jurisdictions.

In areas not covered by the ICMA effort, County agencies use other sources of comparative data. The Circuit Court, for example, makes use of the State of the Judiciary report, an annual analysis of workload statistics and court performance throughout the Commonwealth. For purposes of benchmarking, it makes sense to compare Fairfax County to other Virginia jurisdictions in this service area due to the structure of the courts and their responsibilities in the Commonwealth.

The Facilities Management Division obtains comparative performance data from the International Facilities Management Association (IFMA) as well as the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA). Public safety agencies use data generated by professional

organizations, as well as national data such as crime statistics collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI).

The value of collecting comparative performance data is in its use. This benefit can be considered the "ABC dividend." Accountability, Better Decisions and Continuous Improvement. Accountability was enhanced when the FY 2005 budget was presented with benchmarking data showing how Fairfax County's performance compares to other large jurisdictions and Virginia localities, enabling the Board of Supervisors and the public to be better informed about the quality of County services. Better decisions are made when decision-makers have a more complete picture, particularly regarding how well programs are performing. Sometimes substandard performance indicates that a program needs additional resources; sometimes it indicates an area where the County is gaining little benefit. Continuous improvement is a universal expectation. Just because a service is being provided adequately today does not mean there is no room for improvement. Benchmarking data show who is achieving higher performance, whether it is in the cost efficiency or the actual outcome. By learning

how they achieve that level of performance, staff can determine if the practice is one that is applicable in Fairfax County.

The inclusion of benchmarking data in the FY 2005 Budget was very well received by both the Board and citizens. An objective for next year is to expand the benchmarking presentation to include other areas not currently shown. If your agency currently benchmarks one or more service areas not currently highlighted in the program area summary sections of the annual budget, the Department of Management and Budget (DMB) and the multi-agency Performance Measurement Team would like to hear from you. Please contact Barbara Emerson in DMB if you have any type of comparative performance data. Over the coming months, DMB and the Performance Measurement Team will be working to expand the practice and use of benchmarking in Fairfax County. Stay tuned for future articles.

The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit.

- Nelson Henderson



Performance Measurement Matters is published quarterly by the PM Team. Editor: Barbara Emerson; Technical Support: Lynda Pham, Department of Management and Budget.

PM Events Through August 2004

As noted in the January edition of the *Performance Matters* newsletter, the PM Team will be offering the four-class series on June 16-17, 2004 (see schedule below). The Basic PM Class provides an introduction to the PM system that Fairfax County uses, particularly its terminology and methodology. It covers how to develop objectives and the corresponding Family of Measures. The Data Collection and Surveying classes are for those whose job responsibilities require them to use these tools to ensure the integrity and completeness of performance data collected and/or to survey for customer satisfaction. The Managing for Results class is intended for those who are responsible for using the PM system to manage. Its focus is identifying gaps in performance as well as how to close those gaps and enhance performance. A prerequisite for the Managing for Results Class is to have attended the Basic PM Class. All of these classes are half-day and can be registered for by contacting Barbara Emerson of the PM Team at 324-3009 (e-mail BEMERS) by **June 4, 2004**. Registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis. In addition, please note below that the August 5, 2004 Brownbag will be a brief one-hour refresher for those who had the basic training previously, but would benefit from a review, particularly during budget preparation when this information plays a critical role in resource requests.

EVENT	DATE/TIME	LOCATION
Brownbag Lunch - Public Service Recognition Week - Guest Speaker County Executive Tony Griffin	May 4, 2004 Noon – 1 p.m.	Room 232, Government Center (GC)
Basic PM Training	June 16, 2004 8:30-11:30 a.m.	CR 2-3, GC
Data Collection	June 16, 2004 1-3:30 p.m.	CR 2-3, GC
Surveying for Customer Satisfaction	June 17, 2004 8:30-11:30 a.m.	CR 2-3, GC
Managing for Results	June 17, 2004 1-3:30 p.m.	CR 2-3, GC
Brownbag Lunch - PM Refresher	August 5, 2004 Noon – 1 p.m.	Room 120C, GC

WANTED – New PM Team Members

Each year at this time, the Performance Measurement Team solicits interest for new members. The typical term for members is approximately one year, with the option to extend participation. Members have commented that it often takes a year to learn the system in order to become fully contributing participants. For this reason, many are choosing to stay on for a second year or more. Since most of the current team has elected to stay on the team for another year, there are only 2-3 openings for new members. The following are the requirements and benefits of participating on the PM Team.

Qualifications:

- Team player
- Commitment to keeping Fairfax County a high performance organization
- Recommended for participation by the agency director

Time Commitment:

- Preparation for and attendance at regular meetings (2 hours/month)
- Attendance at PM brownbag lunches as available
- Additional time as needed to perform the functions of the team

Term of Service:

- One year (with ability to extend pending the mutual agreement of the team and the agency director)

Benefits:

- Association with other professionals committed to measuring and improving performance
- Enhanced understanding of the County's PM methodology
- Opportunity to influence the future direction of the effort

If this sounds like something you would be interested in, please send a brief synopsis of your skills and how your participation will benefit you, your agency and the County. Please include this information in a memo from your agency director indicating his/her approval. Forward this to Barbara Emerson, Department of Management and Budget by **May 14, 2004**. Applicants will be notified shortly thereafter and an orientation will be provided.

Service is the rent we pay to be living. It is the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time.

- Marian Wright Edelman



For a wealth of data, check out:
<http://www.virginia.edu/coopercenter/vastat/>